



**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Date: January 22, 2024**

The Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education special meeting was held on January 22, 2024, in the Haddam-Killingworth High School Community Room.

**Board Member Attendance:**

| Board Member      | Present | Absent | Board Member                    | Present | Absent |
|-------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Prem Aithal       | X       |        | Dr. Nelson Rivera               | X       |        |
| Lisa Connelly     | X       |        | Corey Roberts                   | X       |        |
| Jennifer Favalora | X       |        | Suzanne Sack                    | X       |        |
| Shawna Goldfarb   | X       |        | Jennifer Voegtli                | X       |        |
| Hamish MacPhail   | X       |        | Dr. Kathleen Zandi<br>(6:35 pm) | X       |        |
| Heather Pach      | X       |        |                                 |         |        |

**Also Present:** Superintendent Jeff Wihbey, Finance & Operations Director Ben Whittaker, Board Administrator Sarah Kaiser, Curriculum Coordinators Jennifer Beermuender and Heather Rigatti, High School Principal Donna Hayward, High School Assistant Principal Adam Apicella, Teachers Kasha Topa-Finberg and Marcy Webster, Student Representatives Madison Moriarty and Michael Perry.

**Visitors: 6**

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting**

Board Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Cougar Pride**

Kasha Topa-Finberg and Marcy Webster spoke to the Board about the HKHS Holiday Telethon in December. Kasha reported that the event raised over \$15,000 toward Kindness Over Muscular Dystrophy. There were over 3,833 views of the event via the live stream.

Marcy Webster spoke to the talent who participated in the show. Students Molly O'Neal and Mason Mazzotta also told the Board about the donations received, fundraisers, and special guests who attended. A video of the NBC News report of the event was played.

Kasha Topa-Finberg, Marcy Webster, Molly O'Neal, and Mason Mazzotta left the meeting at 6:40 PM.

### **Report from the Student Representatives**

Madison Moriarty reported that several students from the Music program took part in the Southern Region Music Festival this past weekend. She also noted that on February 3rd, seven choir and band students will participate in the state auditions this year.

Michael Perry reported that the High School Midterms ended last week, and the final testing took place on the 22nd due to the weather closure. He also spoke about the 8th-grade orientation happening.

The student representatives left the meeting at 6:43 PM.

### **Superintendent Report**

The Superintendent advised that he would provide the members with the Superintendent's budget report for review in February before the presentation meeting.

Superintendent Wihbey reported that the OSCGR had completed its audit of the 2019 High School solar project and made the final payment of \$436,518 on 12/21/23. This gave the project an effective reimbursement rate of 48.57%.

The Superintendent advised that the FY23 audit is in the process of being completed by the end of the month. An EFS extension was received from the state, and a preliminary update was submitted in December.

The Food Services department featured several items on the December menu that were previously tasted by and approved by the Elementary School Nutrition Ambassadors.

The Superintendent reported that KES presented a check at the HKHS Holiday telethon for over \$800 after the first-grade classes performed.

### **Public Comment**

None

### **HKEA Teacher's Contract-Possible Board Approval**

Board Chair Sack reported that the Board members received the draft of the Teachers' contract and have the privilege to enter into an Executive Session to discuss the contract negotiations and then reenter the meeting to take action.

Jennifer Favalora **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion for the Board of Education to enter into an Executive Session for a discussion related to the HKEA collective bargaining unit contract negotiation and invite Superintendent Wihbey and Assistant Superintendent Miller.

Prem Aithal and Hamish MacPhail recused themselves from the discussion and the vote due to a conflict of interest.

Motion passed by the show of hands 9-0-2.

The Board entered into an Executive Session at 6:49 PM.

The Board exited the Executive Session at 6:54 PM and reentered the public session.

Jennifer Favalora **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to approve the contract agreement between the RSD17 Board of Education and the Haddam-Killingworth Education Association covering July 2024 and June 30, 2027.

Motion passed from the following voice votes 9-0-2.

| Member            | Vote                                                         | Member             | Vote                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prem Aithal       | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO X A | Dr. Nelson Rivera  | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Lisa Connelly     | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Jennifer Voegtli   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO X A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Heather Pach      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |                    |                                                              |

The Board Chair requested that the contract also be posted on the website. She extended appreciation to the teachers for all the work that they do. She also thanked and acknowledged all the teams for the professional manner in which the negotiations took place. (See below the terms of the contract.)

### Curriculum Textbooks

Dr. Zandi reviewed the Curriculum textbook requests that were presented to the Curriculum subcommittee and then brought to the Board last month for a first read. The Board discussed the textbooks presented. Superintendent Wihbey stated that the Curriculum Council will be reviewing the courses on a five-year cycle.

Prem Aithal **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion for the Board of Education to approve the textbooks for Integrated Science, AP Chemistry, AP Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Civics and Contemporary Issues, AP Spanish, and Health as proposed and discussed.

The motion passed unanimously from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

| Member            | Vote                                                         | Member             | Vote                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prem Aithal       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Nelson Rivera  | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Lisa Connelly     | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Jennifer Voegtli   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Heather Pach      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |                    |                                                              |

### High School Opportunities Book First Read

Dr. Zandi reviewed the High School Opportunities Book that was presented to the subcommittee and is before the Board for a Board first read. She discussed that all of the courses will be offered but not specifically held. The Opportunities Book showed the three sets of graduation requirements, including completing the FAFSA forms. The Board approves new courses and graduation requirements each year. These will be denoted in the book. Superintendent Wihbey noted that the Board will receive the Middle School Opportunities Book for review next year, as well as the High School Book.

### Consent Agenda

- a. Enrollment Report
- b. Personnel Report
- c. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$125.80 from Box Tops. The donation will be deposited into the BES Student Activity Fund. Submitted by Brienne Whidden, Principal of Burr Elementary School.
- d. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$1,216.70. This donation was made by the Killingworth Women's Organization as part of a new fund they created, the Community Readers Program, Sponsored by KWO. The money raised for this program is solely dedicated to teachers/librarians at KES to purchase books needed for classrooms, book clubs, etc. Submitted by Dennis Reed, Principal of Killingworth Elementary School.
- e. Authorization Signature change for the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Program. The designated representative Signature line 2 changed to Benjamin Whittaker, Director of Finance and Operations from David Solin.

- f. Approval of Minutes from the December 6, 2023, Board of Education Special Meeting
- g. Approval of Minutes from the December 12, 2023, Board of Education Meeting
- h. Approval of Minutes from the January 6, 2023, Board of Education Special Meeting
- i. Policies for Review First Read
  - i. 1101-Policy Regarding Non-Discrimination (Community)
  - ii. 4111.3-Increasing Educator Diversity Plan
  - iii. 4118.1-Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees (Certified)
  - iv. 4218.1-Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees (Non-Certified)
  - v. 4118.11-Policy Regarding Non-Discrimination (Personnel, Certified)
  - vi. 4218.11-Policy Regarding Non-Discrimination (Personnel, Non-Certified)
  - vii. 5115-Admission to the Public Schools at or Before Age Five
  - viii. 5144.2-Recess and Play-Based Learning
  - ix. 5152-Policy Regarding Non-Discrimination (Students)
  - x. 6120-Parental Access to Instructional Materials
- j. Policy Items of Information
  - i. 1101 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination Complaints (Community)
  - ii. 4118.11 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination Complaints (Personnel-Certified)
  - iii. 4218.11 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination Complaints (Personnel-Non-Certified)
  - iv. 5152 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination (Students)

Dr. Zandi requested to remove item 5.D.d. from the consent agenda for further discussion.  
Hamish MacPhail requested to remove item 5.i.ii. for further discussion.

Shawn Goldfarb **MOVED with gratitude** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion to approve the January 2024 consent agenda as presented less items 5.D.d. and 5.i.ii.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

| Member            | Vote                                                         | Member             | Vote                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prem Aithal       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Nelson Rivera  | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Lisa Connelly     | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Jennifer Voegtli   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |

|              |                                                              |  |  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
| Heather Pach | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |  |  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|

The Board discussed the donation that was made to KES by the Killingworth Women's Organization. The Superintendent will provide follow-up information to the Board regarding the donation.

The Board discussed the process timeline to implement the plan. The team will bring further information as part of the staffing plan that will be shared with the Board.

Dr. Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Dr. Nelson Rivera **SECONDED** a motion to approve items 5.D.d. and 5.i.ii. with gratitude.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

| Member            | Vote                                                         | Member             | Vote                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prem Aithal       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Nelson Rivera  | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Lisa Connelly     | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack       | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Jennifer Voegtli   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail   | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Heather Pach      | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |                    |                                                              |

### Quarterly Reporting

Director Whittaker reported to the Board an overview narrative financial reporting for quarter 2. He reported in detail on the following areas: staff vacancies, workers' compensation, professional services, leases, property & liability, SPED tuition, building improvements, capital fund, and revenue items.

Director Whittaker reported that some budget transfers will be presented to the Board in February for approval. The Board discussed the Summer Education Program and contracted staffing in further detail.

### Master Plan Update Report

Superintendent Wihbey reported that the January 18th Tri-Board meeting was successful. He has received positive feedback from the town attendees. A meeting is scheduled with the District, Arcadis, and Tecton to discuss continued planning and information discussed at the meeting. There were two new options that were included in the available options, The programmatic plan and the alterations plan, to be considered. The next steps will be to obtain

more information on the options and review the data of options 8, 9A, and 9B. Then, updated material will be brought to the next Finance and Facilities subcommittee meeting.

### **Board Subcommittee Chairs and Member Appointments**

Board Chair Sack reviewed the breakdown of the Board subcommittee assignments.

Communications Chair: Lisa Connelly

Curriculum Chair: Kathy Zandi

Facilities Chair: Shawna Goldfarb

Finance Chair: Prem Aithal

Personnel & Evaluation Chair: Corey Roberts

Policy Chair: Hamish MacPhail

Strategic Planning Chair: Prem Aithal

### **Board of Education Subcommittee Goals Review**

Board Chair Sack reviewed that the Board has received their subcommittee goals. The Board Chair and Vice Chair will meet with each subcommittee chair to discuss a goal review, the timing of meetings, committee membership, and how they will discuss the plans with the committees.

### **Finance/Facilities Subcommittee**

Prem Aithal reported that the committee met on January 9th. Director Whittaker previously reviewed the quarterly reports. The committee also reviewed the December financial forecast. There are three areas that the committee will be watching: Special Education expenses, professional services, and the capital fund account. Mr. Aithal will discuss the structure of budget workshops with the Superintendent and Director Whittaker and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Shawna Goldfarb said that the committee further discussed the HVAC mandate, purchase order approvals, and working on the capital and maintenance improvement plans.

### **Policy Subcommittee**

The committee has not met since the last Board meeting. Board Chair Sack thanked Dr. Rivera for his time serving as Policy Committee Chair.

### **Curriculum Subcommittee**

Dr. Zandi reported that the committee received updated presentations from the new courses on computer-integrated manufacturing and contemporary issues in sports. The committee received a presentation from Principal Ventura from the Middle School task force on the proposed scheduling changes for the Middle School. Principal Ventura will update the Board once the plan has been finalized. Dr. Zandi described that Jennifer Beermuender updated the committee on the Reading Waiver and noted that the State only approved 17 out of 86 districts. In addition, the State has added the RSD17 curriculum to its approved curriculum list. Several

districts have contacted Ms. Beermuender to walk through the reading program model. A Right to Read grant was also approved, and the district received \$64,000 to be spent over the next two years specifically for those reading programs.

### **Communications Subcommittee**

No report.

### **Strategic Planning Subcommittee**

Prem Aithal reported that the Board held a six-hour workshop on the Master Capital Plan, community surveys, plan financials, a strategic metrics package, and Board self-evaluations.

### **LEARN**

Jennifer Favalora reported that each of the districts represented spoke on how the reading waiver has affected them. There were questions on how RSD17 was approved. They also spoke on the topic of bargaining unit negotiations. Ms. Favalora also spoke about the Marine Science Magnet School and said they have developed a program to teach the students how to grow and sell coral. The business has become quite successful.

### **HK Youth and Family Services**

Heather Pach reported that the HK craft fair was successful, with a large attendance of over 2,200 shoppers. Ms. Pach also wanted to show gratitude to everyone for the success of the 2023 holiday giving program. She noted that in 2024, HKYFS will focus on mental health prevention, family connections, and overall wellness. Last week, they held a mentor informational training session. On January 25th, there will be QPR suicide prevention training. She also noted that there will be a family plant event upcoming on February 11th.

### **Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department**

No report

### **Haddam Board of Selectmen**

Hamish MacPhail presented to the Town Board. Attention was paid to the Master Capital Plan and how this works with the town's other plans.

### **Killingworth Board of Selectmen**

Lisa Connelly reported to the Town Board, and the Town appreciated the update. There was a request for the information summary to be provided before the meetings.

Board Chair Sack requested that item 5.A. be revisited. She offered a highlighted summary review of the contract changes. Items of note would include:

- The contract is a 3-year term and is available online
- The contract represents a 13.79% increase in salaries over the term of the contract

- Insurance cost share will increase 1% over the next three years
- She highlighted several contract language changes

### **Adjournment**

Prem Aithal **MOVED** and Shawna Goldfarb **SECONDED** a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 PM.

The motion passed by voice votes.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser  
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Board Secretary